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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/05/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [JM](#)
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION LEADER TAUNTS PRIME MINISTER TO BRING
ON ELECTIONS

REF: KINGSTON 1482

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Hugh Neighbour for Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Bruce Golding, the opposition leader for the Jamaica Labor Party (JLP) continues to dare Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller (PSM), the leader of the ruling Peoples National Party (PNP), to call general elections now. The JLP has swept over all parts of the island in a vigorous political campaign that has been labeled the "green invasion" in honor of the party's signature color. However, PSM remains silent on the timing of elections and the PNP has not yet begun what is likely to be an equally large campaign. PNP and JLP contacts tell us that it is unlikely there will be widespread politically-motivated killing that has marred Jamaican political campaigns in the past. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Bruce Golding, the opposition leader for the JLP, continues to dare PSM, the leader of the ruling PNP, to call general elections now. The JLP has swept over all parts of the island in a huge political campaign that has been labeled the "green invasion" in honor of the party's signature color. JLP General Secretary Karl Samuda is reported as saying that the JLP has not seen so much support since the bitter election of 1980 when the JLP won general elections by a landslide.

¶3. (U) PSM has remained silent on the timing of elections and has not begun to compete with the JLP's substantial campaign efforts, leading one local paper to depict PSM as a tortoise and Golding as a hare in a race to the Prime Ministership.

¶4. (C) Jamaica has a history of violence associated with general elections. Hundreds were killed in bitter campaigns during the 1980s between the PNP led by Michael Manley and the JLP headed by Edward Seaga. Politicians seem to have the ability to call supporters to the streets in massive numbers on very short notice. This was evidenced last September when Bruce Golding organized a one-day island-wide strike. His supporters effectively shut down the country for a day by setting up roadblocks, burning tires and brandishing sticks. However, nobody died.

¶5. (C) PNP and JLP contacts unanimously stated that they do not foresee widespread hostility occurring during the next general election. Despite this, most agree that small scale or sporadic incidents of violence could occur. When poloff asked Samuda about the possibility of political violence, Samuda was adamant in his statement that political violence must not occur in the next general election.

¶6. (C) A PNP contact reported to poloff that in an effort to minimize the potential for political violence, there have been internal PNP requests to PSM not to expand the official

campaign period past the three weeks that are required between the call of elections and voting.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: The politicians with whom we have spoken claim they do not want political violence to occur during the next election, despite Jamaica's history. It would seem that the PNP and JLP have enough control over their supporters to press for calm during elections. Moreover, most of Jamaica's chronic violence today is gang-related and/or criminal-related, not politically-inspired. While some violence, including deaths, is certainly possible, we do not expect a bloodletting on the scale of earlier decades. End Comment.

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